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INFO RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY
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INR/IAA (BEN-YEHUDA)
TREASURY FOR MAUREEN WAFER

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/11/2010

TAGS: PGOV PREL KDEM ASEC HA

SUBJECT: HAITI ELECTIONS: ALL SET FOR SECOND ROUND

REF: PAUP 637 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson for reason 1.4(b).

¶1. (C) Summary. The Director General of Haiti's CEP, Jacques Bernard, and MINUSTAH elections chief Gerardo LeChevallier expressed confidence on April 18 that elections preparations were in place and that the second round would proceed smoothly on Friday, April 21. MINUSTAH military leaders also announced that they had completed their security preparations and assured the public of its safety on election day. Campaign activity has increased in the past few days, and President-elect Preval made a public appeal for voter turnout at the airport on April 19 on his return from Cuba. Voter turnout will likely fall significantly below the 62% registered for the first round. L'Espwa will probably emerge as the largest party in both parliamentary chambers, though president elect Preval has deliberately avoided a partisan tone in advance of the second round and courted other party leaders. While we remain concerned about the potential for isolated attempts to disrupt the electoral stemming from local rivalries, we are confident that security planners are well-prepared to respond. The successful completion of the second round should allow for Preval's timely inauguration and selection of a cabinet within a conciliatory atmosphere. End Summary.

Preparations/Security in Place

¶2. (U) Looking relaxed and confident, both Bernard and LeChevallier told Polcouns in separate conversations on April 18 that their teams were carrying out final preparations on schedule and expressed confidence that electoral officials were well prepared. They emphasized they had made great efforts to analyze and implement lessons learned from the first round (reftel), particularly in training poll workers and fine tuning procedures at the counting center. Bernard emphasized that with the first-round experience under their belts, he had come to increasingly to rely on BED, BEC, and other CEP personnel in the field, and as a result of better first-hand reporting from the field, has greatly improved the CEP administration throughout the country. LeChevallier reported that the transfer of sensitive material throughout the country was underway and on schedule, and that MINUSTAH

staff had performed several dry runs of accounting and tabulation procedures that had gone smoothly. DG Bernard went directly from his meeting with Polcouns to the office of the Prime Minister to review final security preparations with senior IGOH and MINUSTAH leaders. MINUSTAH's military commander later publicly announced that security planners had completed their planning and preparation for election day security measures. MINUSTAH expects low-turnout. Some officials quipped that they were aiming to beat the 10% turnout of the last parliamentary elections.

Low-key Campaign

13. (SBU) Campaign activity in Port-au-Prince and advertising on television and radio has increased in the past two days, but most observers expect a much lower turnout for the second round. Haitians traditionally have regarded the parliament of secondary importance in relation to the presidency: with the presidency already decided, voters are presumably less motivated to turn out only for senate and deputy races. UN SRSG Valdes told the Core Group that many political parties had used public funds to pay off debts from the first round, leaving little money for second round campaigning. Preval himself has avoided campaigning in advance of the second round, instead delegating his advisors, notably former prime minister Jacques Eduoard Alexis, to campaign on behalf of L'Espwa party candidates. At the same time, Preval has quietly courted leaders of other parties, particularly FUSION, OPL, and the Protestant UNION party, and to a lesser extent Alyans, MOCHRENA, MPH, emphasizing his interest in cooperating with these parties in the parliament. He will be meeting shortly with Leslie Manigat, the runner-up in the presidential race who bitterly protested the manner by which

the CEP declared Preval the victor, a meeting that surprised some of his staff. Preval has also proposed a 25 year "governability plan" for Haiti and solicited party leaders' participation in the plan's preparation. Preval has pointedly excluded Famni Lavalas party from these overtures.

14. (U) President-elect Preval made his first appeal for voters to turnout for the second round on his return to Haiti from Cuba on April 19, but conspicuously avoided directly endorsing L'Espwa candidates. Preval appealed for voters to turn out en masse, adding that he considered the parliament as important as the presidency and urging Haitians to vote for "competent deputies and senators."

Comment

15. (C) An encouraging air of calm has prevailed in Haiti since announcement of the final results of the first round. While there have been some small-scale incidents of violence and other disruptions aimed at the electoral process in the countryside, these have related to local disputes. At the national level, Preval and other leaders have maintained a non-confrontational public stance. Preval's own behavior has been particularly discreet, aiming to appear presidential through his foreign travel and deliberately discouraging speculation about the composition of his government in advance of final elections results. Whatever the final composition of the parliament, because of the traditional authority of the president combined with the efforts he has already undertaken to cultivate allies among a range of parties, Preval should be able to select the prime minister of his choosing and form a cabinet without undue resistance from parliament..

SANDERSON